



March  
2021

# Farm Household Allowance



## Farm Household Allowance

Farm Household Allowance (FHA) is an Australian Government support package available to eligible farmers and their partners experiencing financial hardship. A common misconception is that FHA is a 'drought payment' but it is available for any type of financial hardship.

Support is available for up to 4 years (1,460 days) in every 10-year period. The time limit means the payment may finish before the reason for the hardship changes. This is why the **case support element** of the FHA is so important.

FHA gives farming families practical support to assess their situation and plan a way forward to long-term financial security.

There are 5 key support elements to the program:

1. A fortnightly income support payment.
2. Ancillary allowances (e.g. rent assistance, telephone, pharmaceutical) and a Health Care Card.
3. Case support from a Farm Household Case Officer (FHCO).
4. A financial assessment of the farm enterprise worth up to \$1,500.
5. \$10,000 activity supplement (lifetime capped) to help develop skills, access training and pay for advice to increase the capacity for financial self-reliance.

## FHA payment

FHA is delivered by Services Australia.

The process to apply for FHA is like any other payment made by Services Australia. Income and assets tests are used to assess the level of hardship. The more complex or intricate the financial situation, the more supporting information must be supplied.

Feedback from recipients acknowledges that the application process can be lengthy, but it is worth it to access the package of assistance. Services Australia and the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) can help you through the process.

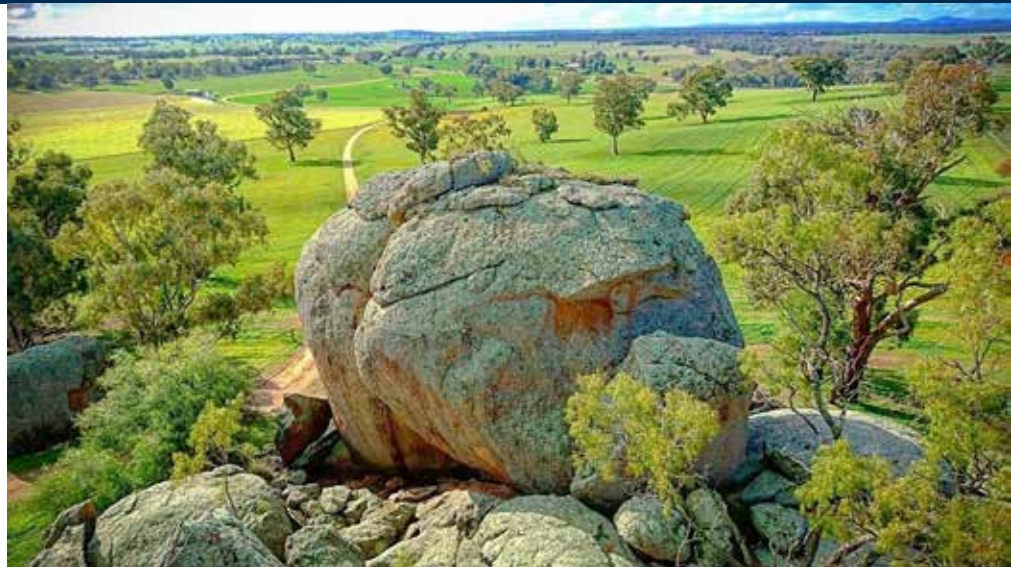
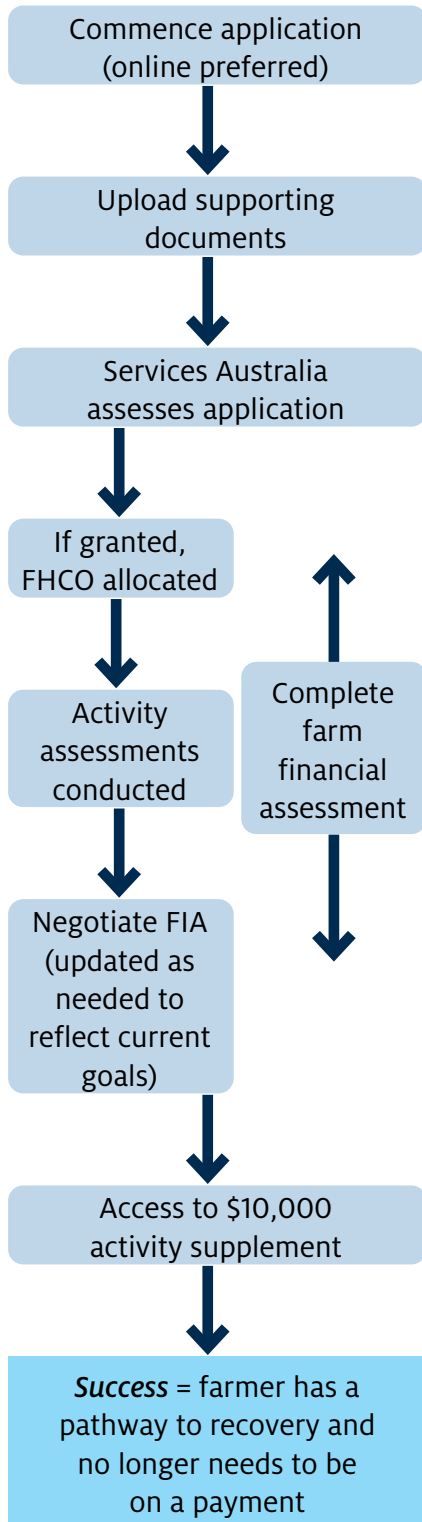
## Applying for FHA

- Call the Farmer Assistance Hotline on **132 316** (8am to 8pm Monday to Friday in all Australian time zones).
- Apply online through a MyGov account or download an application form at: [servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/farm-household-allowance/how-claim](https://servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/farm-household-allowance/how-claim).
- Visit a Services Australia service centre.

## Need some assistance?

- Don't have a Rural Financial Counsellor? It's a free service.
- Find one near you at [agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/rural-financial-counselling-service](https://agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/rural-financial-counselling-service) or call **1800 686 175** (9am to 5pm Monday to Friday EST) to be referred to your nearest provider.
- Support is available, but don't self-assess. Services Australia and the Rural Financial Counselling Service can help you evaluate your situation and determine if FHA is the right support for you.

### FHA process



Morgan Dudderidge—Morgans Lookout

### Planning and adapting for a brighter future

Australian farmers are among the most productive and innovative in the world. They are constantly assessing and adapting to change to deliver premium commodities. Since 2014, FHA has helped more than 16,000 farmers and their partners in financial hardship to apply that same can-do thinking to their businesses.

As soon as payment is approved, FHA recipients can start working with their Farm Household Case Officer (FHCO) to identify areas that are problems or opportunities, and that need to change. This might include using part of the \$10,000 Activity Supplement to pay for external expertise, or training to gain new qualifications that help inject income into the business or household. The supplement can also be used for off-farm activities – recognising that for many people another income stream is vital to survival.

These steps are captured in a Financial Improvement Agreement (FIA) that provides a blueprint for the future. The FIA is a result of the conversations between the recipient and the FHCO. It can be updated as many times as needed. This will ensure people maximise the opportunities available to them during their time on the program.

If the recipient is also working with an Rural Financial Counsellor, the plans developed with them to improve financial self-sufficiency will be a core focus of an FIA.

This personalised support encourages people to use their FHA payments strategically. It empowers them to decide when it’s best to transition off payment and preserve their financial support for any future hardship.

